GCE Music Technology 2017:
Course Planner – AS level/A level (AS in 1 year co-taught with 2-year A level)

Contents

Overview **2**
Year One **4**
Year Two 9

This document is based on the latest information in the accredited Pearson Edexcel AS and A level Music Technology qualifications.

Overview

Year One

Autumn 1	• Component 1: Introduction to recording and mixing • Component 2: Introduction to technology-based composition • Component 3: Introduction to the Component 3 exam • Component 4: Handling and mixing audio
Autumn 2	• Component 1: Recording acoustic/bass guitar and intermediate mixing skills • Component 2: MIDI and synthesis essentials • Component 3: Analogue technology and vocal production • Component 4: Theoretical and practical tasks focusing on MIDI, dynamics and distortion
Spring 1	• Component 1: Exploring the mark scheme, recording percussion/keyboards and advanced mixing • Component 2: Exploring mark scheme criteria • Component 3: Detailed exploration of the question paper and focus on analogue synthesisers/electric instruments • Component 4: Detailed exploration of the question paper and specimen long-response questions
Spring 2	• Component 1: Supervised NEA/practice brief sessions, mixing practice and mastering • Component 2: Supervised NEA/practice brief sessions • Component 3: Comparing analogue and digital effects • Component 4: Specimen questions
Summer 1	• Components 1 & 2: Refining NEA/practice brief project and logbooks • Components 3 & 4: Final revision
Summer 2	• **AS Students sit Component 3 & 4 exams/A level students sit mock Component 3 & 4 exams** • Component 1: Drum recording and preparing A-level brief (returning A-level students only) • Component 2: Preparatory work towards A-level set brief (A level only) • Components 3 & 4: Exploring differences between the AS and A level papers (A level only)

Year Two

Autumn 1	• Component 1: Exploring the mark scheme, multiple mic techniques and preparing/starting the NEA set brief • Component 2: Advanced MIDI and sampling and preparing/starting the NEA set brief

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	• Component 3: The impact of digital and sampling technology • Component 4: Advanced MIDI in practice
Autumn 2	• Component 1: Mixing using advanced dynamics parameters and starting NEA brief • Component 2: Advanced synthesis techniques and starting NEA brief • Component 3: The impact of analogue technology • Component 4: Studio interconnection, microphones and acoustics
Spring 1	• Component 1: Advanced audio editing, pitch/rhythm correction and continuing NEA brief • Component 2: Automating parameters and continuing NEA brief • Component 3: Identifying effects and their parameters • Component 4: Audio editing and manipulating advanced parameters with automation
Spring 2	• Component 1: Supervised NEA sessions with skills-based starter activities • Component 2: Supervised NEA sessions with skills-based starter activities • Component 3: Mixing, mastering and comparing production techniques • Component 4: Focus on essay questions and evaluating production scenarios
Summer 1	• Components 1 & 2: Moving towards completion with NEA brief and associated documentation • Components 3 & 4: Focus on exam technique and final revision
Summer 2	• **A level students sit Component 3 & 4 exams**

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Year One

Autumn 1	Autumn 2
Component 1 – Introduction to recording and mixing (1 lesson per week): • Students will be introduced to the recording task and associated core hardware. • Students will consider the placement of microphones and the influence of the room on the recorded result. • Core mixing techniques will be explored and the half term will culminate in a short recording task that will be mixed and submitted for feedback from the teacher. **Component 2 – Introduction to technology based composition (1 lesson per week):** • Students will be introduced to the composition task and learn about the core functions of their DAW software. • A focus on sample manipulation techniques will allow students to produce a short piece for submission.	**Component 1 – Recording acoustic/bass guitar and intermediate mixing skills (1 lesson per week):** • Taught workshops will focus on the rhythm section within a small band recording – the acoustic and bass guitar. • Students will learn how to use microphones and DI to capture successful takes and use intermediate mixing skills to edit and blend the tracks. • A small-scale recording project will be set to allow students to practise capturing and mixing these instruments prior to starting their longer, brief-based recording. • During the final few weeks of term, as well as receiving feedback on practice work, all students will begin research/preparation for the AS-level brief published by Pearson. **Component 2 – MIDI and synthesis essentials (1 lesson per week):** • Students will explore MIDI functions found within their DAW and put these into practice. • There will be a focus on subtractive synthesis, and this will culminate in a short, practice composing task which focuses on the creation of sounds using synthesis

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Autumn 1	Autumn 2
Component 3 – Introduction to the Component 3 exam (1 lesson per week): • Teaching will focus on the eras of recording and production technology and the styles of question used in the exam. • Pairs/groups of students will explore digital technology through a research task. • Sample questions will also consolidate mixing knowledge covered in Component 1. **Component 4 – Handling and mixing audio (1 lesson per week):** • Teaching will focus on the handling and mixing of audio within the context of prescribed practical tasks found in the exam. • Sample questions will also consolidate practical skills covered in Components 1 and 2.	techniques. • During the final few weeks of term, as well as receiving feedback on practice work, all students will begin research/preparation for the AS-level published brief. **Component 3 – Analogue technology and vocal production (1 lesson per week):** • Through research and taught workshops, students will explore analogue technology and its association with music production and subsequent commercial release. • In specimen questions there will be a focus on vocal production techniques and how these have developed through the various eras of recording and production technology. **Component 4 – Theoretical and practical tasks focusing on MIDI, dynamics and distortion (1 lesson per week):** • Taught content and specimen questions will focus on MIDI/sequencing theory, including correctly importing a MIDI file from the materials provided for the exam and choosing a suitable instrument. • Further written and practical tasks will focus on more advanced processes not yet covered, e.g. noise gating and distortion.

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Spring 1	Spring 2
Component 1 – Exploring the mark scheme, recording percussion/keyboards and advanced mixing (1 lesson per week): • Students will listen to and analyse recordings produced by past students to help them understand the demands of the mark scheme criteria. • Percussion and keyboard recording workshops will complete taught content on tracking instruments. • More demanding mixing tasks will be set using material provided by the teacher, to included detailed corrective EQ, compression and gating. ***For AS students:*** • Start work towards the AS brief published by Pearson as part of NEA. ***For A level students***: • Start work towards the AS brief published by Pearson for practice piece**.**	**Component 1 – Supervised NEA/practice brief sessions, mixing practice and mastering (1 lesson per week):** • Mixing workshops will also take place during this time, e.g. students undertaking peer review on peers' NEA/practice projects. • The final steps of the production process will be investigated in a series of short workshops on mastering. ***For AS students:*** • Continue work towards the AS NEA brief. ***For A level students***: • Continue work towards the AS brief practice piece.
Component 2 – Exploring mark scheme criteria (1 lesson per week): • Students will listen to and analyse compositions produced by past students (e.g. legacy A-level work) in order to understand the demands of the mark scheme. • Starter activities will consider each of the mark scheme criteria in turn. ***For AS students:*** • Start work towards the AS brief published by Pearson as part of NEA. ***For A level students***:	**Component 2 – Supervised NEA/practice brief sessions (1 lesson per week):** • Starter activities will be used at the start of each lesson to cover each aspect of the mark scheme criteria ***For AS students:*** • Continue work towards the AS NEA brief. ***For A level students***: • Continue work towards the AS brief practice piece**.**

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Spring 1	Spring 2
• Start work towards the AS brief published by Pearson for practice piece. **Component 3 – Detailed exploration of the question paper and focus on analogue synthesisers/electric instruments (1 lesson per week):** • Students will learn about the question types contained within the Component 3 exam paper as well as the command word taxonomy used. This study will also include a range of musical styles and key attributes in terms of their use of technology. • A research task and specimen essay questions will follow, with a specific focus on longer-response questions and analogue/electric instruments. **Component 4 – Detailed exploration of the question paper and specimen long-response questions (1 lesson per week):** • Students will learn about the question types contained within the Component 4 exam paper as well as the command word taxonomy used. • A range of specimen questions will assess theoretical knowledge and practical skills learned to date, including the manipulation of pitch, rhythm and frequency response. Taught content on longer-response questions (essays) will focus on the mark scheme and evaluating the use of technology.	**Component 3 – Comparing analogue and digital effects (1 lesson per week):** • Students will learn about and compare a range of analogue and digital effects as well as comparing production techniques from each of the eras of recording and production technology outlined in the specification. **Component 4 – Specimen questions (1 lesson per week):** • Specimen questions for this component will focus on all knowledge and content studied to date, with the addition of effects not already covered by past sample questions.

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Summer 1	Summer 2
For AS students: • **Components 1 & 2** – refine and finish NEA brief project and accompanying logbooks to submit to Pearson for marking. • **Components 3 & 4** – final revision activities ahead of AS exams. ***For A level students:*** • **Components 1 & 2** – refine and finish practice brief for internal marking/feedback. • **Components 3 & 4** – final revision activities ahead of mock exam.	***For AS students:*** • **Components 3 & 4** – sit final exams. ***For A level students:*** • **Components 3 & 4** – sit mock exams, e.g. taken from the AS Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs). ***Following exam period:*** **Component 1 – Drum-recording project and prescribed brief preparation (1 lesson per week):** • Students will take part in drum-recording workshops and complete an associated recording task during independent study. Following publication of the A-level recording brief, students will undertake research into the difficulty and viability of each song/artist prescribed. **Component 2 – Prescribed brief preparation (1 lesson per week):** • Students will focus on the A-level briefs prescribed by Pearson and initially produce a short 'sketch' based on each of these to assist with their choice of brief. **Component 3 – Review of mock exam and investigating the A level paper (1 lesson per week):** • A review of the mock exam paper will take place at this time. Following this, focus will shift to the difference between the AS and A level Component 3 papers. **Component 4 – Review of mock exam and investigating**

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	the A level paper (1 lesson per week): • A review of the mock exam paper will include peer marking for the practical tasks within the paper.

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Year Two

Autumn 1	Autumn 2
Component 1 – Exploring the mark scheme, multiple mic techniques and preparing/starting the NEA set brief (1 lesson per week): • Listening to/marking recordings from past students. • Students will explore multiple mic techniques, investigating how polar patterns are used, e.g. in the context of stereo pairs. Research and preparation towards the prescribed NEA brief will also be ongoing. **Component 2 – Advanced MIDI and sampling and preparing/starting the NEA set brief (1 lesson per week):** • Content for Component 2 will include a range of MIDI and creative sampling techniques that will subsequently be used in developing individual NEA compositions as well as the Component 4 exam. **Component 3 – The impact of digital and sampling technology (1 lesson per week):** • Students will evaluate the impact of digital and sampling technology on music production as well as learning the theory that underpins this technology. **Component 4 – Advanced MIDI in practice (1 lesson per week):** • A range of specimen written and practical tasks will verify students' knowledge of MIDI techniques and the manipulation of more advanced plug-in parameters.	**Component 1 – Mixing using advanced dynamics parameters and starting NEA brief (1 lesson per week):** • Workshops on mixing will cover the more complex parameters of dynamics processors including side chains. Students will explore how processes such as compression and gating are combined with EQ and time-based effects to produce a convincing final mix. **Component 2 – Advanced synthesis techniques and starting NEA brief (1 lesson per week):** • Workshops will cover advanced synthesis parameters including the use of filters and envelopes to shape sound. Starter activities will focus on each aspect of the mark scheme in turn. **Component 3 – The impact of analogue technology (1 lesson per week):** • Students will investigate the impact analogue recording technology and associated effects have had on music production practice through various eras. **Component 4 – Studio interconnection, microphones and acoustics (1 lesson per week):** • A focus on the theory of how equipment in a recording studio works together as well as fundamental acoustics parameters.
Spring 1	**Spring 2**

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Component 1 – Advanced audio editing, pitch/rhythm correction and continuing NEA brief (1 lesson per week): • Starter activities will concentrate on the detailed, corrective editing of audio files within recording projects. **Component 2 – Automating parameters and continuing NEA brief (1 lesson per week):** • Workshops (starter activities) on automating advanced parameters of plug-ins for subsequent use in individual composition projects and the Component 4 exam. **Component 3 – Identifying effects and their parameters (1 lesson per week):** • Specimen questions will focus on the identification of effects and their parameters within commercial recordings. **Component 4 – Audio editing and manipulating advanced parameters with automation (1 lesson per week):** • Practical tasks will concentrate on audio editing and adjusting advanced parameters of plug-ins and automating these according to specific instructions. Students will build confidence in dealing with the focused mixing tasks within the Component 4 exam.	**Component 1 – Supervised NEA sessions with skills-based starter activities (1 lesson per week):** • Students will continue individual NEA brief pieces. Short activities at the start of each lesson will provide additional scope on mark scheme requirements. **Component 2 – Supervised NEA sessions with skills-based starter activities (1 lesson per week):** • Students will continue individual NEA brief pieces. Short activities at the start of each lesson will provide additional scope on mark scheme requirements. **Component 3 – Mixing, mastering and comparing production techniques (1 lesson per week):** • As well as exploring mixing and mastering techniques used when releasing music in different formats, students will compare and evaluate the production techniques heard in commercial recordings. An entire specimen paper (e.g. from sample assessment materials) will be sat and reviewed. **Component 4 – Focus on essay questions and evaluating production scenarios (1 lesson per week):** • In addition to a focus on longer-response questions, students will describe and evaluate a range of recording and production scenarios. An entire specimen paper (e.g. from sample assessment materials) will be sat and reviewed.

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Summer 1	Summer 2
• **Components 1 & 2** – refine and finish NEA brief project and accompanying logbooks to submit to Pearson for marking. • **Components 3 & 4** – final revision activities ahead of the final exams.	• **Components 3 & 4** – students sit final A-level exams.

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